



# Arizona Early Intervention Program

## AzEIP Technical Assistance Bulletin # 5

### Providing Families with Timely Supports and Services

#### **I. Overview**

Early childhood research continues to show that the earlier children and families receive appropriate supports and services, the better the outcomes for children and families. Through early supports and services, families and other caregivers can expand their confidence and competence in facilitating their child's development, participation, and learning in everyday activities and active engagement in primary relationships with parents, siblings and other people important to the family.

To facilitate this early support for children and families, the law requires the initial meeting to develop the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) for an eligible child to be conducted within 45 days from the date of referral. Based on the family's priorities and interests and information gathered through the assessment process, the IFSP team develops functional outcomes and identifies the resources and opportunities, as well as early intervention services necessary to support attainment of the outcomes. The IFSP establishes the planned start date for the initiation of each early intervention service on the IFSP. The service coordinator is responsible to obtain the services identified on the IFSP in a timely manner. See 34 C.F.R. §303.23.

#### **II. Delivering Timely Services**

##### **A. 45-day Timeline**

###### **(1) Definition**

If a child is determined eligible for early intervention services, a meeting to develop the initial IFSP must be conducted within 45 days from the date the child was referred to the early intervention program. 34 C.F.R. §342(a).

###### **(2) Determination**

Once a child is referred to AzEIP and the team determines the child is suspected of having a developmental delay, an evaluation by a multidisciplinary team is conducted to determine eligibility for AzEIP. If the child is determined eligible for AzEIP, the assessment is completed and the team develops the IFSP within 45 days of referral. The 45-day timeline is calculated from the date of referral, as documented on the referral information, until the date the initial IFSP is completed.

### (3) Collection of Information (Data) on 45-Day Timeline

A record is created for every child referred to AzEIP, in the approved automated data system (such as ACTS-4 or FOCUS). Thereafter, additional data is entered, including evaluation, service information, and intervention data. The IFSP date and other information from the IFSP are entered into the data system.

The referral, eligibility and IFSP dates determine whether the evaluation and IFSP meeting were held within 45 days from the date of referral. If the evaluation and IFSP meeting were not conducted within 45 days, the early intervention personnel must enter the reason for the delay into the data system. The reasons include: family, team capacity, waiting for medical records, or CAPTA.

Example of a Family reason: The Blue family is moving at the end of the month, and wish to delay the evaluation (or IFSP) until the second week of next month when they are settled into their new home.

Example of a Team Capacity reason: The team lead was late in contacting the family after eligibility had been determined and was not able to schedule the IFSP meeting until after the 45<sup>th</sup> day.

Example of Medical Records Delay: The Swan family moved to Arizona from Texas. After moving to Arizona, the family self-referred to AzEIP on June 1. Their child has a diagnosis of IVH3, but the family does not have the child's medical records to document this. A consent to release the records is signed by the family and sent to the physician in Texas on June 15. The IPP team lead follows up with the physician's office three times and the medical records are received on July 28.

Example of a CAPTA reason: Sally Smith was referred to AzEIP by a behavioral health clinician; at the time she was living in foster home A. When the team lead called to arrange time for an initial visit she was informed that the child had been moved to a different foster home but foster home A did not have the new contact information. It took the team lead 3 weeks to track down the CPS worker and new foster home to schedule the initial visit, with the result that the evaluation was not completed within 45 days of referral.

## **B. Service Delivery**

### (1) Definition

An early intervention service is timely if the service(s) begins on or before the "planned start date" listed on the services page of the IFSP.

### (2) Determination

The family's IFSP team decides which supports and services are needed to make progress toward the desired child and family outcomes. These supports and services are listed on the IFSP Supports and Services page, and include the "planned start date" for each service. The IFSP team determines the planned start date for each service to reflect the priorities of the family and their need for support in attaining the identified IFSP outcomes, as well as the roles of each team member in supporting each other and the family. As a result, planned start dates may be different for each service.

The service coordinator is responsible for accessing timely early intervention services as identified on the IFSP. 34 C.F.R. §303.23. Therefore, the service coordinator must ensure services are accessed and initiated on or before the "planned start date." Service coordinators obtain services through their agencies' network of providers, which can include employees or contractors and the family's health plan.

A service coordinator is required to:

- (a) Facilitate the identification of service providers according to the IFSP;

- (b) Ensure that each service begins in a timely manner; and
- (c) Track and record in the child's record when each service began.

Follow-up with service providers and the family, as well as written documentation, is critical to ensuring that the services are provided in accordance with the IFSP Planned Start Date.

### (3) Collection Information (Data) on Timely Services

The service coordinator must enter the actual date the service started on the Supports and Services page of the IFSP and into the appropriate data system, such as ACTS-4 or FOCUS when confirmation is made. If the service starts after the planned start date on the IFSP, the reason for the delay must be noted, as either family or team capacity.

Example of Family Reason for Delay: Jimmy Green had to have emergency surgery the day before the OT was to start in accordance with the planned start date on his IFSP. The family contacted the service coordinator requesting the OT to start two weeks later.

Example of Team Capacity for Delay: Jimmy Green's IFSP includes services with a planned start date of June 15. On June 15, the individual assigned to provide services to the family is on sick leave for three weeks, and the agency has not made alternative arrangements for an individual to provide services during that time.

In an effort to assist service coordinators in documenting the actual start date of services on each child's IFSP, an **"Early Intervention Service Request and Start Date Notification"** form and an **"Early Intervention Start Date Notification"** form has been developed. Programs or agencies that do not have a formal process in place to request IFSP services from a particular provider, may want to consider using the "Early Intervention Service Request and Start Date Notification" form.

Many programs have processes in place to request the service, however, monitoring has revealed that very few programs have formal processes in place for the service provider to notify the service coordinator that the service started, what date the service started, and, if needed, the reason for delay. Further, many service coordinators are not informed when the service provider has been unable to contact the family, which results in families experiencing delays in services.